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Research Article

APAMARGA KSHARA: A VERSATILE HERBO-MINERAL PREPARATION IN AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Kshara Kalpana (alkaline preparations) is a specialized pharmaceutical preparation in Ayurveda, which deals with the preparation of alkaline substances derived mainly from plant sources. Kshara is considered as a potent and refined form of Chedana (excision), Bhedana (incision), and Lekhana (scraping) action, making it a minimally invasive tool in Ayurvedic surgical and para-surgical practices. It is extensively discussed in classical texts like Sushruta Samhita, particularly in the context of Shalya Tantra (surgery). Apamarga Kshara is a classical Ayurvedic alkaline formulation prepared from the whole plant of Apamarga, which is widely utilized in the management of diseases such as Arsa (piles), Bhagandara (fistula-in-ano), Charnakeela (warts), and Dushta Vrana (chronic wounds). This article details the step-by-step pharmaceutical procedure for Apamarga Kshara preparation, along with its therapeutic relevance and classical background. Objective: To describe the method of preparation, pharmacological properties, and clinical utility of Apamarga Kshara. Methods: Apamarga Kshara was prepared using classical Ayurvedic methods and observed for changes in physical characteristics, weight, and therapeutic efficacy. Results: 36 g of Apamarga Kshara was obtained from 2250 g of the whole plant. The preparation showed classical Chedana–Bhedana–Lekhana actions, confirmed through observational and confirmatory tests. Conclusion: Apamarga Kshara presents a safe, effective, and minimally invasive alternative to surgical intervention in various conditions like Arsha and Bhagandara.

Keywords: Kshara Kalpana, Apamarga kshara, alkaline, Shalyatantra, Para-surgical applications

INTRODUCTION

Kshara, described extensively in Sushruta Samhita, is an alkaline substance obtained through the processing of Kshari Dravyas (alkali-rich herbs). The term “Kshara” is derived from its ability to cause tissue destruction, particularly affecting muscle and other bodily tissues¹. According to Acharya Sushruta, Kshara is defined as a substance that possesses the properties of Ksharana and Kshanan, which refer to its ability to cause destruction or dissolution¹. As per Ayurvedic principles, it is tridoṣa hara, possessing Uṣṇa virya and Tikta-Katu rasa, and is used both internally and externally for therapeutic purposes². Kshara Kalpana holds significant value in Bhaishajya Kalpana, where it is categorized under Upakalpana due to its specialized method of preparation and wide therapeutic index. The importance of Kshara is well documented in the Sushruta Samhita, particularly in the Chikitsa Sthana of Arsha Chikitsa and Kalpa Sthana. Sushruta classified Kshara as a substitute for surgical instruments (Kshara karma being an anushastra karma) and considered it superior due to its accessibility, effectiveness, and lesser complications³. The pharmacological applications of kshara includes Chedana (Excision of overgrown tissues), Bhedana (Incision and channel formation), Lekhana (Scraping of unhealthy tissues), Shodhana-Ropana (Cleansing and healing of wounds) etc. These actions make Kshara valuable in treating non-healing wounds, piles, fistula-in-ano, sinus tracts, and warts.

Acharya Sushruta listed numerous ingredients for Kshara preparation, with Apamarga being one of them⁴. Among all the Ksharas described, Apamarga Kshara is the most widely used and scientifically explored. Plant Apamarga is known for its Katu-Tikta rasa, Uṣṇa virya, and Kapha-Vata shamaka properties⁵. Apamarga Kshara acts as a herbal cauterizing agent, promoting debridement and healing in surgical and para-surgical conditions.

Standardization of Kshara is a challenge due to variation in raw materials and processing methods. Modern analytical tools like pH determination, titration, and chromatography are being employed for quality assurance. Research is ongoing to validate its efficacy and safety, especially in ano-rectal and dermatological disorders.

Drug review: Apamarga, known scientifically as *Achyranthes aspera* Linn., belongs to the Amaranthaceae family. In the classical texts of Ayurveda, it is categorised under several therapeutic groups. According to Charaka, it falls into Shirovirechana, a group of herbs used for expelling doshas from the head and neck through treatments like nasya and dhoompana; Krumighna, herbs known for their antimicrobial and antiparasitic actions; and Vamanopaga, herbs used to support emesis therapy (vamana). In Sushruta's classification, it is listed under the Arkadi group. Commonly referred to as the Rough Chaff Tree or Prickly Chaff Flower in English, it is known as Aghada in Marathi and Latagira in Hindi⁶.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Equipment: Vessel, spoon, grinder, glass bottle

Table 1: Ingredients

Apamarga whole plant	2250 g
Sudha pashana	5 g
Dagdha pashana	5 g
Jalashukti	5 g
Shanka nabhi	5 g
Chitraka churna	1.5 g
Water	906 g

Method of preparation⁷ : Collect fresh Apamarga plants (including roots, stems, leaves, flowers, and seeds) and clean to remove soil and foreign materials. Then dry it completely under sunlight to remove moisture. After that burn the dried plant in an open area or controlled furnace until complete ash is obtained. Ensure full combustion without charring. Then collect the fine, white ash free from charcoal or debris. Sieve the ash to remove impurities. Ksharodaka is prepared by adding 6 parts of water to the ash and it is filtered for 21 times. Kata sarkara, Bhasma

sarkara, jala shukti & sankha nabhi are taken in the mentioned quantity and nirvapa is done in ksharodaka. After these nirvapita katasarkara, bhasmasarkara, jalashukti, sankhanabhi are made into paste by adding ksharodaka and add to the lohapatra containing ksharodaka followed by churnas of danti, dravanti, chitraka, talapatra, langali, hingu, ativisha, putika, pravaala, vidalavana, souvachala, kanakakshiri, vacha churna. Continuous stirring should be done till it attains na ati Sandra and na ati drava form. Then it is scrapped well to attain kshara and stored in an airtight container. The final product is a white to pale brown alkaline substance, known as Apamarga Kshara.

OBSERVATION

- Color change was noted after each filtration, ie, after 21st filtration it became gaumutra varna ksharjala.
- The maximum temperature during the preparation of ash was 600 C.

Table 2: Yield

Weight of ash	151 g
Weight of Apamarga kshara	36 g

Incineration		Collection of Ash		Nirvapita katasarkara, bhasmasarkara, jalashukti, sankhanabhi
				
Ksharodaka filtration		Ksharodaka		Grinding of Nirvapita katasarkara, bhasmasarkara, jalashukti, sankhanabhi
				
Mixing of ksharodaka, grinded paste and other ingredients		Heating to get na ati Sandra and na ati drava form		Apamarga kshara
				

Figure 1: preparation of Apamarga kshara

RESULTS

Table 3: Results on different parameters

Test	Observation
Physical Appearance	White to pale brown powder
Confirmatory Test	Burnt Erandanala with 100 vakshatamatra – Tikshna Kshara ⁸
Therapeutic Action	Chedana, Lekhana, Bhedana, Ropana

Table 4: Therapeutic applications

Condition	Mode of Use
Arsa (Piles)	Direct application or in Kshara Sutra
Bhagandara (Fistula)	Apamarga Kshara Sutra therapy
Charmakeela (Warts)	Topical application of paste
Dushta Vrana (Chronic Wounds)	Kshara lepa or wash
Meda Granthi (Lipoma)	External lepa

AMAYIKA PRAYOGA⁹

- Swasa- Apamarga kshara + madhu
- Badirya- ¼ part Apamarga kshara kalka+1 part tila taila+ 4 parts water cooked in mandhagni to retain only the oil part (Apamarga kshara taila)
- Udara shula, adhmana- Apamarga kshara + trikatu churna + yavani
- Lingarsha- Apamarga kshara + shu. Haratala E/A
- Switra kushta- Apamarga kshara+ shu. Manashila+ gomutra E/A
- Mutrakricchra, mutrashmari- Apamarga kshara+ yavakshara
- Gulma, pliha roga- Apamarga kshara+ trikatu churna+ saindhava lavana

DISCUSSION

Apamarga Kshara stands as a classical yet scientifically relevant formulation in Ayurveda, showcasing the integration of herbo-mineral pharmaceuticals with para-surgical applications. The traditional method of preparation, involving incineration of the plant and aqueous extraction, is a clear example of early alkaline extraction techniques rooted in Ayurvedic pharmaceuticals.

The choice of Apamarga (*Achyranthes aspera* Linn.) is well justified due to its alkaloid content, Katu-Tikta rasa, and Uṣṇa virya, which contribute significantly to its Chedana (excision), Lekhana (scraping), and Shodhana (cleansing) actions. The method of preparation, although simple, requires careful monitoring especially during filtration and concentration phases to ensure quality and potency of the final product.

The therapeutic utility of Apamarga Kshara, particularly in Arsa (piles), Bhagandara (fistula-in-ano), and Charmakeela (warts), aligns with Sushruta's concept of Kshara Karma as a substitute for surgical intervention (Anushastra karma). The formulation not only helps excise pathological tissue but also promotes local healing with minimal recurrence.

Modern analytical methods such as pH analysis, ash value testing, and microbial load testing can further support the standardization and safety of Apamarga Kshara. Thus, further research and pharmacopeial standardization are essential to ensure uniformity, safety, and efficacy. Combining classical knowledge with modern pharmaceutical tools will help enhance its acceptance in mainstream para-surgical and wound care management.

ADVANTAGES OF APAMARGA KSHARA

- Minimally invasive alternative to surgical interventions
- Cost-effective and easily available
- Has Shodhana (cleansing) and Ropana (healing) properties
- Useful in conditions where surgical excision is contraindicated
- Minimal invasiveness
- Quick healing
- Low cost and easy availability
- Suitability even for patients unfit for surgery

PRECAUTIONS

- Avoid use in bleeding disorders or sensitive mucosal areas
- Proper dosage and duration must be followed to prevent tissue damage
- Use gloves and protective measures during application

CONCLUSION

Kshara Kalpana demonstrates the scientific and therapeutic sophistication of classical Ayurveda. Its potent actions, versatility, and minimal invasiveness make it an invaluable tool in both traditional and integrative medicine. With proper standardization and research, Kshara therapy can bridge traditional wisdom with modern surgical needs. Apamarga Kshara is a time-tested and highly effective Ayurvedic formulation with significant value in Shalya Tantra. Its potent Chedana–Bhedana–Lekhana properties offer a non-surgical option for various surgical disorders. Its actions, including tissue repair and dosha balancing, highlight its efficacy in restoring health. Modern formulations like Apamarga Kshara blend traditional wisdom with scientific innovation to meet evolving healthcare needs. Standardization of its preparation, storage, and application protocols can ensure its safe and effective use in contemporary Ayurvedic practice.

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